

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COL-
LEGES COOPERATING.

STATES RELATIONS SERVICE, OFFICE
OF EXTENSION WORK, NORTH AND
WEST, WASHINGTON, D. C.

FARM - BUREAU ORGANIZATION PLAN.

By L. R. SIMONS, *Agriculturist, County-Agent Work.*

MORE FARM BUREAUS NEEDED TO FEDERATE AGRICULTURAL FORCES FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

The organization of farmers is not a new idea. It has been the theme of publicists for more than a century, and much effective work has been accomplished. Thousands of cooperative agricultural associations are working successfully, besides other thousands of farmers' clubs, granges, equities, gleaners, and other secret and nonsecret fraternal associations that are performing an excellent service for rural organization in their respective fields. The county farm bureau will help to unify the efforts of these existing organizations and to strengthen the work they are doing. It is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian, nonsecret organization representing the whole farming population, men and women alike, and acts as a clearing house for every other association interested in work with rural people. Essentially it is a chamber of agriculture, corresponding in many of its functions with a city chamber of commerce. The farm bureau is not a dream of theorists but was developed by the necessity of meeting the need for effective county agricultural-agent work. The agent as the county agricultural director or extension leader soon found that an organization was essential to extend his work effectively over the county. The farm bureau has been the answer to this need. Its primary purposes are:

- (1) To bring to the agent the counsel and advice of the best farmers in the county as to what ought to be done and how to do it.
- (2) To provide an organization for easily and quickly reaching every community in the county with information of value to that community or to the county as a whole.
- (3) To provide a plan for organized self-help, enlisting the cooperation of all farmers interested in carrying out a county agricultural program of work.

While the original conception of the farm bureau was as an aid to county-agent work, it was quickly realized that it has a broader

field, and now it is coming to be recognized as the official agricultural body interested in promoting all that pertains to a better and more prosperous rural life. It unites with the Government and State in the employment of a county agricultural agent who is a paid leader and the agricultural director within the county. It is quite as much interested in home-economics demonstrations, boys' and girls' club work, farm-management demonstrations, and the

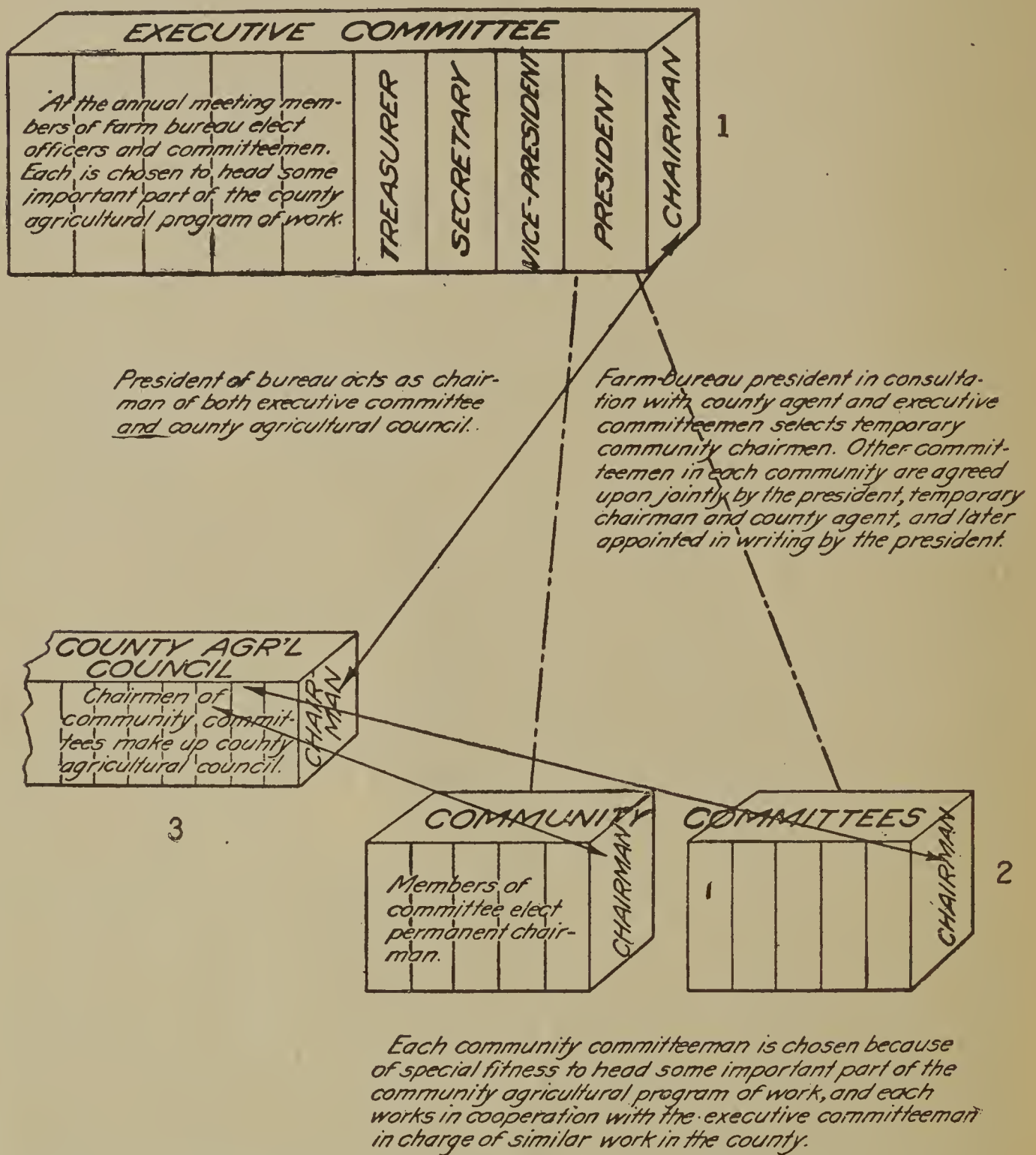


FIG. 1.—Plan of electing or appointing farm-bureau officers and committees.

work of the various institutional specialists as it is in the demonstrations carried on under the direct supervision of the county agent. The service of the farm bureau is available to all extension agencies desiring to work within the county. Thus, while an outgrowth of county-agent work, the farm bureau movement is bigger than county-agent work and has become the federating agency through which all the groups of rural people, whether organized or unor-

ganized, are able to secure a hearing. It exercises and develops local leadership in the rural affairs of each community.

On December 1, 1916, there were 287 farm bureaus in the 33 Northern and Western States, with a membership of 98,654. Since that date a large increase in the number of bureaus and in the membership has taken place. The need of such an organization has been recognized in ordinary times. The present extraordinary conditions brought about by the war make such an association indispensable if this country is to cope effectively with the problems of production, marketing, and distribution, and the complete organization of our rural life now immediately necessary to meet a great national emergency.

The purpose of this circular is to give a simple plan of organization which has proved successful under ordinary conditions, and which it is believed is elastic enough to meet any situation that may be required of it. (See fig. 1.)

CHIEF FEATURES OF THE PLAN.

(1) *A representative membership*, made up largely of farmers scattered generally over the county, each paying a nominal membership fee (usually \$1).

(2) *An executive committee*, composed of four officers of the bureau and about five other members, all elected at the annual meeting of the farm bureau. Representation on this committee is given to other strong county agricultural organizations, such as the grange, breeders' associations, etc. Each member is selected because of his special fitness to promote some important part of the county agricultural-improvement program. Each must not only be willing to serve, but he must have the necessary time to give to the work and must be so located that he can be of the most effective service.

(3) *A community committee*, composed of a chairman and from one to four other members, well distributed in each distinct community in the county. Representation is given to strong, active, local agricultural organizations of the community, such as granges, equities, etc. Each member is selected because of special fitness to direct some important part of the community agricultural-improvement program.

(4) *A county agricultural council*, composed of the chairmen of the various community committees.

DETAILS OF THE PLAN.

MEMBERSHIP.

Membership in the farm bureau is open to all residents of the county who are directly interested in agriculture, men and women alike. The membership should be well distributed over the county

and should be large enough to be thoroughly representative of the farmers of the county. At least 10 per cent of the farmers should be members before permanent organization is effected. Not more than 20 per cent of the total membership should be nonagricultural.

The membership fee is not primarily to provide funds but to secure the active interest of each member. No difficulty is experienced in keeping up the membership from year to year if a clear-cut presentation is made of the facts regarding the nature of the organization, the duties and privileges of the members, and the work already accomplished and to be undertaken.

Every member not only should give his moral support to the work but should give his personal attention to some activity of the bureau. He should keep in close touch with the work in progress and assist in planning for the coming year. He should participate in the election of the officers and executive committeemen.

OFFICERS.

The officers of a farm bureau consist of a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, all of whom should be elected at the annual meeting for a period of one year. Their administrative duties should be those usually assigned to such officers. For the most part the officers should be farmers.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

An executive committee of 5 to 10 members, usually including the officers of the bureau as ex officio members, should be elected by the bureau at its annual meeting for a period of one year. This committee may contain members nominated by the official county board of commissioners or supervisors, the grange, the farmers' union, the equity, the farmers' clubs, cooperative associations, county fair, schools, etc. (See fig. 2.)

The executive committee usually is selected so that practically all sections of the county will be represented, but in large counties with inadequate transportation facilities committeemen should be selected who can attend the regular (monthly) meetings conveniently. In the selection of a committeeman one of the chief objects should be to secure a man whose qualifications and personal interest fit him to plan and develop some important line of work or activity of the bureau, such as farm-bureau organizations, farm-bureau publications, meetings, demonstrations and exhibitions, finance, home-economics demonstrations, boys' and girls' club work, crop improvement, live-stock improvement, farm-management demonstrations, cooperation between farmers' clubs, development of better marketing facilities, etc.

Duties.—(1) Signs memoranda with State extension director.



FIG. 2.—A farm bureau executive committee and county agent planning seed corn selection and testing demonstrations. The active cooperation, advice, and assistance of the farmers in a county are essential to the success of county-agent work.

- (2) Makes up financial budgets.
- (3) Secures necessary funds.
- (4) Authorizes the expenditure of the bureau's money.
- (5) Determines the policies of the local bureau.
- (6) Considers and approves programs and projects recommended by the county agricultural council.
- (7) Cooperates with the State agricultural college in the employment of a county agricultural agent, a home-demonstration agent, boys' and girls' club leaders, and other local extension workers nominated or approved by the State extension director.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEES.

Local community leadership is essential to the success of the farm-bureau movement. Each distinct community in the county should have a community committee made up of at least one, and preferably three to five, local representatives or local leaders of the bureau.

Method of choosing.—The president of the farm bureau, usually in consultation with the county agent and subject to the approval of the executive committee, should appoint the temporary chairmen of the community committees. If a grange or other local farmers' club or organization is popular with the majority of the farmers in any particular community and is active in promoting the improvement of agricultural conditions, the officers of such an organization

should be consulted before the appointment of a temporary community chairman.

The remainder of each community committee should be appointed by the president upon recommendation of the temporary chairman, executive committeemen, or county agent. Such appointments always must have the approval of the executive committee. In selecting the committeemen in each community care should be taken to see that each important agricultural interest in the community is represented on the committee; for instance, if dairying, poultry raising, and hog raising are important industries, a dairyman, a poultryman, and a hog raiser should be made members of the committee.

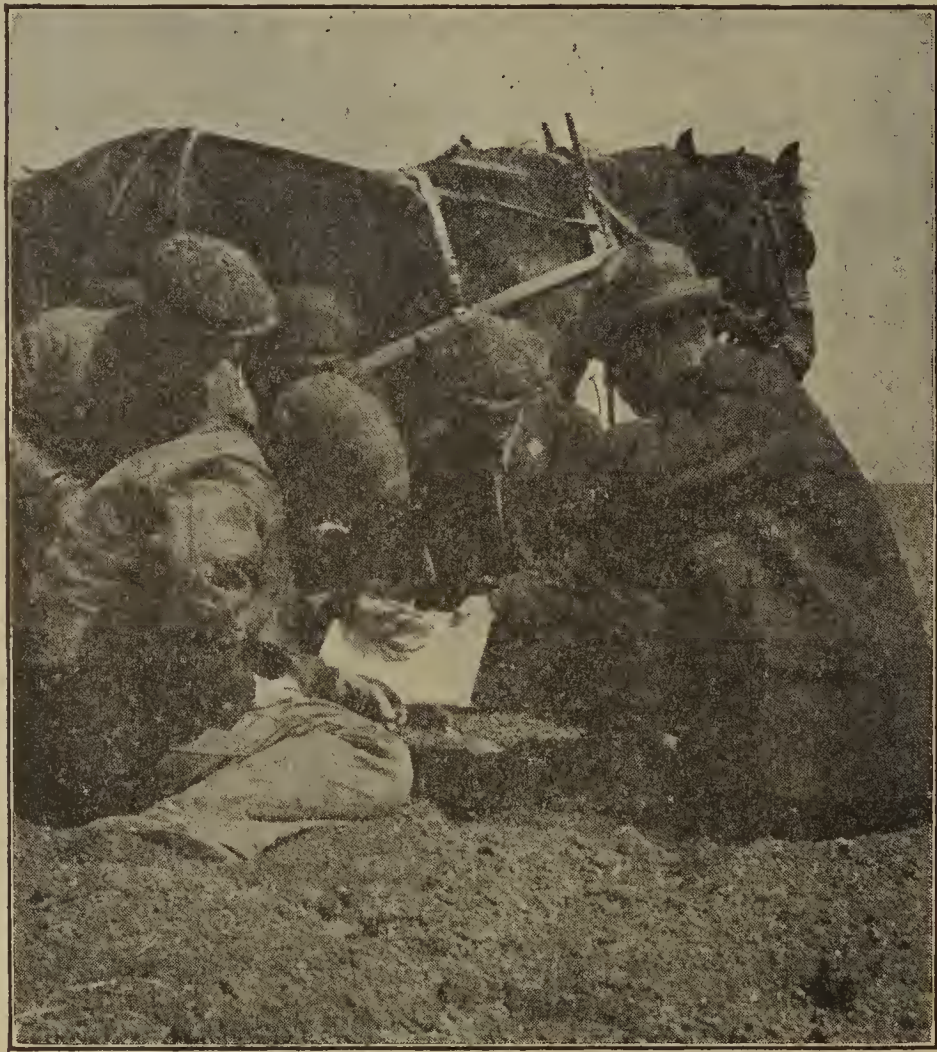


FIG. 3.—A community committee meeting during a busy season.

If boys' and girls' club work or home-economics demonstrations are being conducted in that community, a local community leader of such work should be on the committee. At the first meeting of the community committee the members should elect a secretary and a permanent chairman, who will also be a member of the county agricultural council, as hereinafter provided for. The chairman will then delegate certain definite duties to each member of the committee.

All community committeemen should be appointed for a period of one year.

Meetings.—As many meetings of each community committees should be held as are needed to plan and execute the agricultural program of

the community. (Fig. 3.) Such officers and executive committeemen as are needed to assist in promoting the work in hand in the community should meet with the local committee. If certain features of the county program demand immediate attention, sectional meetings of the committees of several contiguous communities should be held. If the plan of delegating certain definite duties to individual members of the committee is followed, fewer meetings are needed.

Duties.—(1) To determine and discuss local problems, to assist through its chairman in the formation of a county agricultural program of work, and to adapt this program locally, thereby formulating a community agricultural program of work which eventually will solve the local problems.

(2) To secure for the community the desired community and individual assistance in solving local problems by arranging for at least one winter meeting and one summer field-demonstration meeting and for a few definite field demonstrations.

(3) To secure for the bureau the active support of the farmers in the community by informing the residents of its organization, purposes, and work, by arranging the details and advertising local meetings, demonstrations, etc., and by soliciting and securing memberships.

Privileges.—Community committeemen are the recognized leaders of the bureau's agricultural-extension work in the community. They are brought into frequent contact with the county agent and the extension specialists. By helping others they help themselves in information, inspiration, and general development.

THE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL.

To be most efficient the executive committee should not contain as many members as would be required to give representation to each agricultural community. In order that every organized community may have direct representation in planning the county program of work and recommending the policies of the organization, meetings of the chairmen of all community committees are held. This body of men is known as the county agricultural council. (See fig. 4.) Such a council is necessary if the unity of the county organization is to be preserved.

Duties and meetings.—At least one meeting of the council should be held each year to discuss the recommendations made by the various community committees and to recommend to the executive committee a yearly county program of work or to suggest the making of such changes in the permanent program as may seem necessary. Additional meetings of the council are desirable if important matters arise

requiring the attention of the entire council. Matters concerning only a few communities in the county frequently arise, in which case only the chairmen representing those communities need be called together. A luncheon is suggested as a desirable feature of at least one of the meetings of the entire council.

Presiding officer.—The president of the bureau should act as chairman for all meetings of the council, and the secretary of the bureau as secretary of the council.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A COUNTY.

Leader of organization campaign.—Write your State agricultural college and secure the assistance of the county-agent leader or one of his assistants to act as leader of the organization campaign. Temporary quarters should be provided for him at the most centrally located place in the county, so that he may keep in close touch with the progress of the campaign in every community.

Appointment of temporary county organization committee.—The leader will assist in the selection of a temporary county organization committee of about five members, representing all sections and all important agricultural interests in the county.

Newspaper publicity.—Plenty of good publicity matter, written in a series of several articles and giving the advantages of organization in general, the history of the county-agent movement, results of local extension work in neighboring counties, need of an organization to cooperate with the agent, plans for starting the work in this county, and the progress of the campaign, should be given to the local press at opportune times.



FIG. 4.—A meeting of the county agricultural council.

Meeting of county committee.—(1) The leader should explain county-agent work carefully and suggest the organization plan.

(2) He should secure the committee's approval of the plan and its help in working out the details to meet local conditions.

(3) The committee should decide on a definite date for the completion of the membership campaign and the necessary number of members to be secured before that date.

(4) An outline map of the county may be drawn, showing approximate community boundaries, and on it the location of temporary community committeemen, indicated as each is selected by the county committee. In considering prospective candidates for the community committees, their qualifications for effective service on permanent community committees for the ensuing year, as well as for temporary service, should be discussed. In so far as possible the number of members to be secured in each community should be decided and indicated on the map.

(5) The county committeemen should give the leader permission to use their names in sending letters to local committees, in newspaper articles, etc.

(6) Definite arrangements should be made with each member of the county committee to attend the meetings of the temporary community committees where he can be most serviceable.

(7) As far as possible, each county committeeman should be assigned a definite part of the preliminary-organization program, such as publicity, finance, programs for local and county organization meetings, etc.

Plans for organizing temporary community committees.—(1) Arrangements should be made by telephone with the prospective chairman of each community committee to hold a meeting of the committee at his home. Ask him to communicate with the other prospective committeemen, inviting them to attend the meeting.

(2) Supplement these telephone calls with personal letters signed by one of the members of the county committee. It is best not to discuss the purpose of the meeting other than to suggest that their advice is needed in determining matters of great interest to the farmers in the community.

(3) The leader, accompanied by the county committeeman who can be of most assistance in each community, should meet with each committee in its own community, or, if time does not permit, in a sectional meeting of the committees of several contiguous communities.

(4) At this meeting the purpose of the organization and its relation to county-agent work, including work for farm women, boys' and girls' club work, and plans for organizing the county,

should be explained carefully by means of charts, maps, and black-board. Definite plans for the campaign in the community should be made and a definite promise to serve secured from each prospective committeeman.

Community organization meetings.—Following the committee meetings, an organization meeting should be held in each community at which the leader and county and community committeemen should explain county-agent work and the importance of having a large percentage of the farmers as members of the farm bureau. During a recess the local committeemen, already provided with membership cards and membership badges, should solicit members.

Farm-to-farm organization campaign.—The local committeemen should then take the names of those farmers not present at the meeting and arrange to visit each one personally on the farm and, if possible, secure his membership.

Invitation to county-wide organization meeting.—Invitations signed by one or more members of the county committee should be sent to all members to attend the county-wide organization meeting. They should be urged to invite all interested persons to accompany them. The letter should also contain a return addressed postal card bearing the following questions:

What do you want the farm bureau to do (1) for you on your farm? (2) for your community? (3) for your country?

The answers to the questions should be tabulated and used at the county meeting as a basis for discussing a permanent county program of work.

County-wide organization meeting.—(1) Several committeemen should line up outside the entrance to the meeting place to secure additional members. They should be well provided with badges, membership cards, receipts, etc.

(2) A constitution and by-laws should be adopted.

(3) A permanent program of work should be planned.

(4) Officers and executive committeemen should be elected for a period of one year.

Development of permanent county organization.—Following the county organization meeting the permanent organization should be perfected according to the plan stated in this circular and the officers and committeemen carefully trained for effective service.

ORGANIZATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE AT STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

Individuals or organizations interested in securing further information or assistance in the organization of a farm bureau should write the extension director at the State agricultural college. He

will be able to furnish such material as sample constitution and by-laws, membership cards, suggestions for and samples of farm-bureau papers and exchange lists, news articles giving accounts of the accomplishments of county agents, etc. If sufficient interest is shown by a large number of leading farmers of a county, the county-agent leader located at the State agricultural college or one of his assistants usually can spend several days in the county assisting local leaders in organization work.

